



## SHA reports on Aruba's new learning system titled "Ciclo Basico"

In the school year of 2004-2005 Aruba inaugurated a new teaching system titled "Ciclo Basico," an interactive program that employs more participation by the students, instead of the standard teacher lecture system that was in place in most schools. This program was applied to the first two years of the secondary schools across the board, the MAVO, HAVO and VWO programs. SHA, the organization that initiated this program is also monitoring the program, to see if it is having the desired effect of increased stimulation of the children, and better absorption of the material.

On Thursday morning, representatives of SHA, Gina Botta, coordinator on the project, and Gervais Rene Herde, Director of SHA were present with Roosleen Oduber, Director of the Department of Education to give to the press the results of this new program, after one year in practice.

A survey taken of students, parents and teachers brought the results that were announced at Thursday's meetings, and the conclusions and recommendation of the SHA monitoring committee.

In general, the monitors observe that the reception is good, and the results are positive, but there are certain exceptions taken by both parents and students in regards to the practices of this new program. Most notably, is the feeling that there is not enough teacher guidance or input into some of the work, if understood correctly, and that the students are perhaps left a little too much on their own in the completion of projects. Also, though the new books and materials are considered interesting, and capture the students' interest, getting these materials to all the schools has been a bit slow, and some are still without.

It would appear that the positive results of the program far outweigh the negatives, and so through the collation of the information from this first survey, these negative elements will be eliminated.

"We must keep monitoring this process," states Gina Botta, "and we must never, ever stop innovating this process. We can have a goal for the next two years, five years or ten years, but that does not mean that after those ten years we will stop, or not innovate for a period of twenty years, as in the past. We HAVE to continue with all kinds of monitoring and we never, ever can STOP with the innovation of the educational process." Two more surveys are planned, one in December and again in March or April of 2006.

Some of the results of the survey that it was felt would improve the new system is that teachers would like to have more parent-teacher meetings, and parents agree, and that there should be a better system to inform the parents of how the system is working for their children. Thirty-seven percent of the parents surveyed expressed they really did not have a thorough understanding of the new educational system. The survey did manage to canvas eighty-eight percent of the students, fifty-one percent of the parents, and fifty-five percent of the teachers. Most expressed extreme satisfaction with the new program, and the major exception was the lack of materials, which they are now working hard to remedy.

"This change to active participation is very important, and unfortunately is not happening in all classrooms," states Ms. Botta, "but many of our teachers are close to retirement, and are having difficulty to adjusting to the new system. We started training in 1996 with a training program, but we feel we must instigate another training program again, we believe. Many of the teachers were happy with the way they were teaching, and do not have the time or energy to change to the new system. This has to be dealt with on a school-by-school level. Each school board must examine their results, and see where they have a weakness."

Ms. Botta stressed that Thursday's meeting was only to give the results of the monitoring of the program, and some conclusions, with an eye towards the continual improvement of the educational system. It was in no way a criticism of the schools or the teachers, just a fact finding exercise to give guidance as to how to best serve Aruba's youth, which of course, are the island's future.